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SUBJECT: REVVING UP FOR CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

REF: A. KABUL 0976  
B. KABUL 0891  
C. KABUL 0922  
D. KABUL 0993

¶11. (U) A week before the candidate registration period begins on April 25, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) on April 18 held a press conference to provide information to the public and interested presidential and provincial council candidates on how to register. The IEC also kicked off its voter education campaign for the candidate registration process. The IEC reaffirmed to the media that it is rolling out preparations for the election; estimating 29,000 polling stations will be set up within the approximately 7,000 polling centers around the country. On the same day, President Karzai signed a decree supporting the establishment of the Electoral Complaints Commission, which will play a key role in determining candidate qualifications. Karzai has not yet signed the draft decree on prohibiting official interference in elections (ref a).

#### HOW-TOS FOR CANDIDATES

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¶12. (U) At the press conference, the IEC highlighted the candidate registration process (ref b), emphasizing the requirement to present proof of voter registration for the signatories supporting candidacy ) 10,000 are required for presidential candidates, 200 for provincial council candidates. Other key issues included campaign finance, including the requirement that each candidate designate a financial agent (ref c), and the prohibition against any candidate using government resources, including (but not limited to) government offices, buildings and transportation. The IEC also stressed that per article 62 of the Afghan Constitution, a presidential candidate "should not have citizenship of another country." The IEC requires that candidates with dual citizenship complete the process of relinquishing any non-Afghan citizenship prior to registering as a candidate. The IEC will require proof of loss of nationality.

#### INFORMING THE PUBLIC

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¶13. (U) On April 18, the IEC started a national public information campaign on the candidate registration period. Television spots airing on 10 stations around the country are designed to educate voters and candidates until the May 8 close of the registration period. Informational spots are playing six times per day on thirty radio stations through the same period. Three mobile phone companies sent over 1.8 million SMS messages in Dari and Pashto between April 18 to ¶120. The message on Emboff's own mobile informs the recipient that, "Candidates for the office of the presidency and provincial council have from the 5th - 18th of Sawour (April 25-May 8) to put their names forward." The IEC's information call center is currently operating between 8:00AM and 8:00PM with four operators per shift; any interested party can place a free call to ask about the electoral process. Starting

April 24, the call center will increase hours of operation to 6:00AM - 12:00AM with 10 operators per shift to handle the extra hours and expected increase in the number of calls. The IEC is also publishing fact sheets on the technical details of the candidate registration process. These fact sheets will be available on the IEC website and in hard copy at IEC offices around the country.

TYING UP A LOOSE END ON CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS

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¶4. (SBU) Also on April 18, President Karzai signed a presidential decree supporting the requirement of the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC). Because the ECC formed on April 4 (ref d), the decree has little practical effect, but lends further political legitimacy to the ECC and eliminates possible political quibbles that the Commission was not properly formed and therefore not set up to carry out its mandate in examining candidate qualifications and adjudicating challenges. The decree concurs with the composition of the ECC as detailed in Article 53 of the electoral law and stresses the importance of the ECC as an independent safeguard of the election process. It also supports the ECC mission of impartially adjudicating complaints and preventing fraud.

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